Council provides overall strategic guidance on mainstreaming climate change in development, identifies key intervention priorities, and monitors the implementation of these interventions.

Slow pace of work on Puntamba-Shirdi railway line

t3511. SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the work on Puntamba-Shirdi railway track is going on at very slow speed;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the steps being taken by Government to complete this work at the earliest;

(d) by when Puntamba-Shirdi railway track would be completed; and

(e) by when railway facility would be made available on this track?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) the work is affected due to delay in providing land by the State Government and slow progress of construction due to increase in royalty on earthwork and resistance of local people in quarrying moorum.

(c) Matter of providing land is being pursued with the State Government. The royalty issue has also been taken up with State Government.

(d) and (e) The work is expected to be completed and commissioned by December, 2008.

Rail accident near Moga in Punjab

3512. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in December last, there was serious accident near Moga in Punjab involving a school bus and a running passenger train;

(b) if so, the details thereof, indicating the number of persons who lost their lives and were seriously injured in the mishap; and

(c) the findings of the statutory inquiry conducted and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. On 14.12.2007 at 08.20 hrs., a mini bus No. PB 29 E 9482 struck against 4629 Up Ludhiana-Firozpur Sutlej Express at Manned Engineering Level Crossing Gate No. 40-C between Jagraon and Ajitwal railway stations on Ferozpur Division of Northern Railway. This accident resulted in the death of 16 persons, grievous injuries to 8 persons and 6 persons suffered simple injuries.

(c) The Commissioner of Railway Safety, Northern Circle, who is holding statutory inquiry into this accident has submitted his Preliminary Report. As per the provisional findings given in the Preliminary Report, the above accident occurred because the gateman on duty opened the Gate without taking permission from Assistant Station Master of Ajitwal Station and did not protect the railway track before opening the gate. The Loco Pilot of the train did not reduce the speed of the train despite the heavy fog and the poor visibility and he and his Assistant Loco Pilot did not blow the horn continuously from the whistle board till the level crossing gate. The Gateman was arrested by Police and has been placed under suspension by

t Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

the Railway Administration. Action on the immediate recommendations given in the Preliminary Report has been initiated by the Railway.

Rishikesh-Dehradun link Railway line

3513. SHRI TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal for Rishikesh-Dehradun link Railway line;

(b) whether his Ministry is aware that Rishikesh is the most popular pilgrimage and tourist centre;

(c) whether there is any further plan to have more trains going to Rishikesh or attaching compartments with other trains which go upto Haridwar; and

(d) whether there is any proposal to have more shuttle services between Rishikesh and Haridwar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir, However, Rishikesh and Dehradun are already connected by Railway line *via* Raiwala.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

Increase in running time of trains

3514. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been increase in the original running time of various Shatabdi and Jan Shatabdi express trains over the years;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for the increase in running time of these trains which are meant to connect major cities in minimum possible time; and

(c) wheat steps can be initiated to restore the original status of these trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Running times of some of the Shatabdi/Jan Shatabdi trains have been increased marginally. However, some of the Shatabdi/Jan Shatabdi trains have also been speeded up.

(b) Due to provision of additional stoppages, speed restrictions and other operational factors.

(c) Steps like increasing the sectional speed, eliminating the speed restrictions, utilization of high powered locomotives, rationalization of stoppages etc. are taken for speeding up of trains, which are onging exercise.

Modernisation of stations under Southern Railway

3515. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of railway stations under Southern Railway which have been selected for modernisation as announced in the last Railways budget;